

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

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## NOT QUARRELSOME

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church. Even if you do not aspire to a position, your practice should be the same if you want to be a maturing, godly man.

Our twelfth characteristic is “not quarrelsome.”

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

1 Timothy 3:3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, **not quarrelsome...**

A good alternate translation would be *not contentious*. The KJV uses the word “brawler.” One commentator used the word “litigious” which means *inclined to dispute or disagree*. We use it of folks who are quick to file lawsuits against others.

Gene Getz suggests that we are all on a ‘quarrelsome continuum.’

- On one end are those who hate contention but nevertheless occasionally stir up an argument that was unnecessary.
- On the other end are those who love to say ‘black’ when you say ‘white.’ They believe they are the devil’s advocate and play the part to the fullest. They are contrary and make things difficult for no apparent reason. They are a majority of one in every discussion.

Over the years I’ve known a few too many quarrelsome folks. They carry a chip on their shoulders. They always think they are being treated unfairly. They are quick to make accusations. They file grievances at work over

seemingly petty issues. They write letters rather than talk to you face-to-face.

I've often been asked to mediate in situations where believers disagree. Trouble is, I'm not really being asked to mediate. I'm being asked to render a verdict for one person and against the other. Usually the situation has gotten so out of hand that the original issue has been overwhelmed by a lot of personal insult and innuendo.

As a pastor I most often encounter the doctrinally quarrelsome. They hold tenaciously to some position that is nonessential. Or they suddenly adopt a position that is different from the folks they have been in fellowship with.

About ten years ago the Reformed doctrines of predestination swept through Calvary Chapel's and the Calvary Chapel Bible College. Suddenly there were men and women, including some pastors and teachers, who tenaciously believed in Calvin's TULIP. It became a huge quarrelsome mess!

Over in Visalia the leadership decided to embrace Reformation Theology. It more than split the church. They lost the majority of their members.

Here in Hanford we had a few folks who were influenced and tried to influence others. One brother who had been a strong evangelist turned all his attention on converting Christians to Calvinism. Another wanted to start using Reformed materials in our Youth Study.

It affected home life as well. In one case a husband who had 'converted' to Calvinism called to ask me if his wife had to believe what he believed since he was the head of the home. She wanted nothing to do with the teaching that Jesus died only for a preselected few people.

(They ended up divorced. It wasn't over doctrine but it had a lot to do with a contentious spirit).

Contention itself isn't always the result of someone being quarrelsome. Perhaps the most famous contention in the New Testament is that between Paul and Baranabas.

Acts 15:36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."

Acts 15:37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

Acts 15:38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

Acts 15:39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

Acts 15:40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

I'm with Paul on this one, but I can see Barnabas' point of view. This wasn't a case of either man being quarrelsome. *Sometimes we can't just all get along!*

It's not being quarrelsome if you have to correct or rebuke someone. Paul had a famous episode in which he had to openly confront Peter. Peter was avoiding the Gentile believers, withdrawing from them and hanging only with the Judaizers.

Galatians 2:11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

Galatians 2:12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

Galatians 2:13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

This was a clear and very essential issue over which there could be no quarrel.

In everyday church life we need to be careful both in correcting and in receiving correction:

- I've seen folks 'correct' others when it's not warranted. We need to humble ourselves and not disguise our quarrelsome attitude by acting as if it is spiritual and helpful.
- Most people don't receive correction - even when it is warranted! All of us need to be more open to God using others to bring correction into our lives - without becoming quarrelsome.

Obviously a maturing man will try to maintain unity. He will prefer and pursue peace with everyone else.

Compromise is not a dirty word. It doesn't always mean that you've sold-out or somehow lost ground. In fact, if that's how you approach relationships and issues, it might be a sign you are more quarrelsome than you think.

There is a famous quote, ascribed to Augustine, that applies. "In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, love."

Maybe a good application would be to evaluate not if you are quarrelsome but when. What issue or topic will you absolutely not give ground on? That gets you quarreling?

It might be something essential and important. But if it isn't, let it go. Pursue peace and maintain unity.